

2 Samuel 15:1-11 - Thursday, April 23rd, 2015

- The chapter before us is arguably amongst the most valuable in the pages of Holy Writ as it relates to its lessons for leadership.
- For those who are not in positions of leadership let me hasten to say the lessons that can be learned are even more valuable.
- This because, you can gain invaluable insight and discernment concerning those who may in fact be sheep in wolves clothing.

- Such is the case with Absalom, as we'll see. He wasn't only a sheep in wolves clothing, he was a shepherd in wolves clothing.
- I'd also like to mention by way of introduction, that I will be referencing a book titled, "A Tale of Three Kings," by Gene Edwards.
- The three kings in Edwards's tale are Saul, David, and Absalom. Simply put, this book is a must read especially for leadership.

Allow me to read to you the author's preface to the second edition, which I have as a Kindle Edition, "When I first penned A Tale of Three Kings, I would have been encouraged to know it would live long enough to go through two or three printings. I utterly underestimated the number of devastated Christians out there. A far broader audience than I anticipated has taken up this book. It is an audience made up of Christians damaged by such things as church splits and individual "Christian to Christian" clashes. I have been a little awed by the reception of this book and the fact that the reception has been worldwide. The number of Christian workers who have ordered this book in bulk, to be passed out to their people, has been only short of phenomenal. That A Tale of Three Kings has been turned into plays and has been read publicly from pulpits turned awe to amazement. Obviously, there is a great deal of pain and hurt out there in Christendom that is rarely addressed or ministered to."

Edwards, Gene (2011-06-14). A Tale of Three Kings. Tyndale House Publishers, Kindle Edition

- There's something else I would like to mention before we jump into this chapter, and it's that of my own personal experience.
- More specifically, I have personally experienced first hand what happens to a church when there's an Absalom in its very midst.
- While I don't deem it necessary to share in detail my own personal Absalom experience, I will share that which is appropriate.

1 After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

- Here in the first verse we have our first valuable lesson concerning the Absalom's of this world namely that of an outward show.
- This is textbook when it comes to the antagonist like Absalom in the sense that they shine outwardly, yet lack integrity inwardly.
- Actually, they will seek to bolster themselves outwardly in order to hide that which they do not possess in themselves inwardly.

Charles Spurgeon offers some good insight as to why it is that they knowingly and cunningly do this, "Outward pomp often catches the attention of the populace, and therefore Absalom added to the attraction of his own handsome person the unusual magnificence of chariots and running footmen."

2 Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, "What city are you from?" And he would say, "Your servant is from such and such a tribe of Israel." 3 Then Absalom would say to him, "Look, your case is good and right; but there is no deputy of the king to hear you." 4 Moreover Absalom would say, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice." 5 And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him.

- Here in these verses we have more valuable lessons concerning the Absalom's of this world such that they can be aggressive.
- Notice that we're told Absalom would get up early in the morning so as to posture and position himself there at the palace gate.
- This was so he could prey on those who in difficulty who were in legal trouble, which is why they brought their case to the king.

- Perhaps sharing from my personal experience with my Absalom would be apropos here, as this is exactly what he would do.
- He would make sure he got to the office before I did, and he would instruct my secretary to route all of the calls directly to him.
- Unbeknownst to me he was positioning himself so as to intercept everyone who was coming to the church for me as the pastor.

- If you were to ask me what makes an Absalom so dangerous and destructive to a ministry, this would have to be my answer.
- Absalom's are cunningly friendly under the banner of, "the king is too busy to see you, but really care about you and I love you."
- Notice that when people would come near and bow down to Absalom, he would lift them up and kiss them to appear loving.

- In my own personal experience, my Absalom would tell people that I as their pastor was just too busy to take any time for them.
- Then, once I was thrown under the bus so-to-speak he would say to them what Absalom said, "Oh that I were to be the pastor."
- Notice how Absalom throws David under the bus saying that if he were king he would have time for everyone to have justice.

Charles Spurgeon - "Absalom's ambition led him to take great pains to appear affable and attentive to all. He was early at the palace gate and spoke with all suitors, being "hail-fellow well met" with them all. He flattered each one that his cause was good, and pretended to regret that justice was much neglected; and applicants were kept waiting. If he were king, matters would be seen to at once, and no one should have to complain of delay or injustice. Everybody said "What a courteous prince? What a just and careful ruler Absalom would be!"

Pastor Damian Kyle of Calvary Chapel Modesto in California had this to say, "This is the most detestable thing to me in any human beings life as I've run into it in my own life. It's a deliberate undercutting of his father and his father's authority by elevating himself then making his father the king to look bad in declaring that he would handle it much better. ----

Pastor Damian Kyle (Continued) Now here's the problem with that, what he's telling them is that David doesn't really care about you and your cases, but I care. Do you want a king that cares? I'm your king. David ...doesn't care anymore. This is the kind of backstabbing that's going on and the problem is that it's a complete lie because David gave the woman of Tekoa an audience with him. David was not distant from the people that he was overseeing as their king. This happens with every single leader. I've seen this scenario in church splits not here but in other places over and over and over again. Somebody in some kind of a support position that has tons of time on their hands and here's David who is ruling over all of Israel and all of the surrounding land that has been conquered at a time in his life that is so busy nobody could ever believe it. And here's Absalom who's doing nothing and real slow, everyday, and he's trying to make David look like the one who is doing nothing, and people believe this kind of stuff and he starts to steer the people and their loyalty away from David who is the one that had been so good to them."

6 In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

- I suppose it should come as no surprise that Absalom would steal the hearts of Israel, given his cunning was met with success.
- Notice he didn't "win" the hearts of the men of Israel. Rather he "stole" the hearts of the men of Israel. That's an apt description.
- Also, notice how we were told that it was "in this manner Absalom 'acted' toward all Israel. In other words, this was a deceptive act.

7 Now it came to pass after forty years that Absalom said to the king, "Please, let me go to Hebron and pay the vow which I made to the LORD. 8 For your servant took a vow while I dwelt at Geshur in Syria, saying, 'If the LORD indeed brings me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.' " 9 And the king said to him, "Go in peace." So he arose and went to Hebron.

- I need to point something out that's been a subject of some debate related to verse seven saying 40-years had come to pass.
- There are some that suggest this was Absalom's age at the time, while others suggest it really should be recorded as 4 not 40.
- In either case, it's believed David is about 60-years of age at the time that Absalom launches his rebellion against his father.

- That said, notice the way in which Absalom approaches his father; he couches his request in godly terms concerning a vow.
- This is as cunning as it is clever because Absalom knows his father will grant his request if he packages it in a spiritual way.
- The lesson here becomes quite clear in that Absalom's tend to be very manipulative by coming across as being hyper spiritual.

- One more thing before we move on and it has to do with the contrast between David's innocence and Absalom's wickedness.
- David is innocently gullible not suspecting Absalom to be so full of guile, which is usually the case with those who are trusting.
- Sadly, verse nine records for us the last words David will ever say to his son Absalom, which is simply that of, "Go in peace."

10 Then Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, "As soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then you shall say, 'Absalom reigns in Hebron!' " 11 And with Absalom went two hundred men invited from Jerusalem, and they went along innocently and did not know anything.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is that Absalom has managed to "recruit" two hundred men.
- The reason I find this so interesting is because Absalom's are outstanding recruiters and we're told why they are in verse 11.
- Those recruited are usually kept in the dark. Notice in verse 11 we're told they went along innocently and didn't know anything.

- This begs the question of why Absalom's keep their recruits in the dark. I believe there's a couple of reasons as to why this is.
- First, it's because they wouldn't likely be recruited if they knew the recruiter was plotting a rebellion to overthrow someone else.
- Second, they want to give the appearance of implied consent in the sense that the recruited innocents appear to endorse them.

One commentator said, when the innocent and unknowing are among the divisive their silence is always received as agreement.

Charles Spurgeon - "These persons accompanied Absalom to join with him in his devotions, and out of respect for the king's son; but they were not in the secret of the plot. Absalom, however, used their presence for his own ends, by making the common people believe that these honorable men had left David."

- I trust you won't mind if I bring the study to a close at this juncture, as we will turn a corner of sorts starting with verse twelve.
- The reason is Absalom will continue recruiting for his rebellion, which increases in number, as this conspiracy grows strong.
- Another reason is David will learn that Ahithophel who used to be his chief advisor and most trusted friend had joined Absalom.

- Suffice it to say, the common denominator for different reasons between Ahithophel and Absalom is bitterness towards David.
- It's ironic in a way by virtue of the fact that what made them bitter towards David, is that which led to the brokenness of David.
- Perhaps this is the final lesson for tonight anyway; as the recipient of a wrong, I'll either become bitter, or I'll become broken.

Lastly I'll close with a quote from the aforementioned book, "A Tale of Three Kings," "David was caught in a very uncomfortable position; however, he seemed to grasp a deep understanding of the unfolding drama in which he had been caught. He seemed to understand something that few of even the wisest men of his day understood. Something that in our day, when men are wiser still, even fewer understand. And what was that? God did not have - but wanted very much to have - men and women who would live in pain. God wanted a broken vessel."

— Gene Edwards, A Tale of Three Kings